

Abstract

A method of billing a variable bit rate communication between a first terminal and a distant terminal to a broadband subscriber permits changing billing parameters during a call in real time in response to user inputs including user requested changes in quality of service, changes in data rate and changes in preferred service provider. A variable bit rate communication to be billed has a variable quality of service related to the degree of utilization of a plurality of different networks. The billing method comprises the steps of i.) receiving user identification data at a first terminal and data representing a required bit rate and a default quality of service selected by the user, ii.) verifying the user identification data to be associated with the broadband service subscriber, iii.) determining least cost alternative network resources available for achieving the communication at the user selected default quality of service and the required bit rate, iv.) determining cost data associated with the network resources, v.) outputting to the user a least cost for the communication according to their selected default quality of service and alternative least cost network resources, vi.) coupling the first terminal and the distant terminal via the least cost determined network resources at the default quality of service and the required bit rate responsive to user authorization and vii.) billing for the communication at the default quality of service and according to the required bit rate after the termination of the communication.